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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TEGUCIGALPA 000647

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA A/S TOM SHANNON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/23/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: TFH01: HONDURAN COUP: POLITICAL WRAP-UP 07/23/09

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 632 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens, E.O. 12958, 1.4(d)

11. (U) Summary: This is another in a series of daily round-ups of political news in the aftermath of the June 28 forcible removal and exile of President Manuel Zelaya from Honduras. End Summary.

San Jose Proposal

12. (U) Arias' new eleven point proposal was presented July 22 in a press conference and July 23 in the local newspapers. The following is a summary of the proposal which incorporates ideas from Zelaya and Micheletti's delegation:

- A government of unity and reconciliation would be formed, composed of members of the political parties.
- General amnesty for political crimes associated with the events of June 28th.
- No direct or indirect action to reform the Constitution to allow extension of Presidential terms.
- Elections moved up to October 28, 2009 and the campaign season to begin on August 1, 2009.
- Placement of the Armed Forces and the National Police under the command of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal one month before the elections.
- The return to Honduras of Jose Manuel Zelaya Rosales as President of Honduras until the completion of his term on January 27, 2010.
- The constitution of a truth commission, presided by the OAS.
- Annulment of any policies that affect Honduras, participation in the international community.
- Integration of a commission of verification for the implementation and interpretation of this proposal.

Local Press Report Negotiations a Failure

13. (U) Local press characterized the July 22 talks in Costa

Rica as a failure. Zelaya declared the same evening via Venezuelan network Telesur that the negotiations in Costa Rica had "practically failed." Zelaya said his delegation was willing to accept the agreement and accept the conditions, but Micheletti's delegation had arbitrarily rejected any possibility of an agreement.

Three Branches to Analyze San Jose Proposal

14. (U) The newspaper "El Tiempo" reported that the Micheletti delegation has agreed to bring the new plan presented by Arias at the July 22 press conference to the three independent branches of the Honduran government for consideration. However de facto regime Foreign Minister Carlos Lopez Contreras stated publicly that "Zelaya's return as president is non-negotiable" and the situation will go nowhere as long as the imposition of Zelaya as President continues to be a condition of the agreement.

15. (SBU) Embassy contacts expressed July 23 that there is still hope for a resolution and that members of the pro-Micheletti regime "white team" are beginning to realize that although imperfect, Arias' proposal may be the best way out of the political crisis. Zelaya's return and amnesty are the two big stumbling blocks of Arias' proposal; however the "truth commission" is an important part of the proposal that encourages the white team. Embassy contacts believe that the Attorney General's office, led by Luis Alberto Rubi Avila, is the least likely to agree to the commission. Contacts also expressed that extreme and biased media coverage such as

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conservative "El Heraldito" is counterproductive to a solution.

16. (SBU) Emboff spoke with Vice President of Congress Ramon Velasquez Nazari who said that Congressional Deputy Irias Navas presented a motion July 22 stipulating that Congress could not retract the actions that were taken to make Micheletti President because they were done in a legal manner. The leaders of all parties of Congress signed the motion except for the Democratic Union party. Nazari also said he does not believe that the Supreme Court or the Attorney General's Office will sign on to Arias' proposal. The Supreme Court has not yet changed their stance that Zelaya cannot legally return as President and the Attorney General's Office said in a press conference July 22 that amnesty cannot apply to Zelaya. The Ambassador plans to meet with the President of the Supreme Court on July 24.

Stalemate with Venezuelan Embassy

17. (U) July 21 Micheletti's de facto government gave the Venezuelan ambassador and staff 72 hours to leave Honduras. The response from the Venezuelan embassy was that they do not recognize the de facto regime and therefore will not respond to their request.

Zelaya Announces his Return

18. (U) Local and international media reported that Zelaya declared he will begin his return to Honduras today (July) by land through Nicaragua. However which one of the three possible entry points he will use has yet to be announced. He has asked his supporters to be ready and declared that "the civil war has begun in Honduras." Zelaya has told us privately he plans to stay on the Nicaraguan side of the border and meet with his supporters.

¶9. (U) In a press briefing from Nicaragua on Telesur the afternoon of July 23, Zelaya stated that Micheletti's rejection of the Arias proposal is an insult to the United States, Secretary Clinton, Arias and the international community. He said his presence at the Honduran border is his right. He asked that "rifles and bayonets be put down" and called on students, military and citizens to not approach his return with violence, to avoid any bloodshed. He called for a dialogue and an agreement at the border. Well-known leaders of the revolutionary and Sandinista movement in Nicaragua expressed their support publicly for Zelaya and promised to accompany Zelaya to the border.

Evangelical Brotherhood to Lend a Hand

¶10. (C) On July 23, 2009 the Ambassador met with Jose Oswaldo Canales, President of the Evangelical Brotherhood of Honduras. Canales expressed his deep concern for the state of current affairs and said he and his network of religious leaders had tried to get the de facto government to agree to a resolution but had failed. He stated that it is widely believed that the Zelaya actions that led to the expulsion were part of a strategy created by Chavez and that "Honduras will never be the same again." However, his network feels that the San Jose Declaration is a good one and that Micheletti should consider accepting this proposal. He also brought up the difficult economic situation, which is an issue on the minds of his flock and networks of leaders. The Ambassador laid out the U.S. position that the forceful removal of the democratically-elected President of Honduras by the military was unacceptable to the USG even if we understand that many of Zelaya's actions leading up to the events were wrong. He stressed that the USG strongly supports the Arias process and said that the deal offers a compromise that incorporates at least 80% of the Micheletti counterproposal. The Ambassador noted that the Arias plan

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provided an opportunity to restore the democratic order, achieve a measure of reconciliation, and allow for the holding of elections and the transfer of power to a new President on January 27, 2010. He pointed out that Zelaya had always been an institutionally weak President with little influence over Congress, the courts, the security forces, and the political parties (including his own Liberal Party). He noted that the Arias proposal contained strong guarantees to make sure that Honduran institutions remained in place and that both sides complied with its terms. Canales agreed that it was in everyone's best interest to accept the San Jos proposal and he offered his services to the Ambassador. The Ambassador concluded by asking that Canales and everyone in his network to help Arias in any way they can.
LLORENS